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CONFIDENTIAL JERUSALEM 000318

DEPT FOR SMEC AND NEA

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PREL KWBG KPAL PTER PINS PLO IS US
SUBJECT: ARAFAT ORDERS ARREST OF ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADERS

¶1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT.)

¶2. SUMMARY: NABIL SHA'ATH INFORMED CONSUL GENERAL LATE JANUARY 24 THAT FOUR PRINCIPAL ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADERS IN GAZA HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY THE PPF. SHA'ATH SAID THAT ARAFAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IS DETERMINED TO TAKE CONCRETE STEPS AGAINST ISLAMIC RADICALS. ARAFAT REPORTEDLY UNDERSTOOD THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURE ON RABIN FOLLOWING THE BEIT LID BOMBING. SHA'ATH COMMENTED THAT RABIN NEEDS USG SUPPORT VIS-A-VIS HIS DOMESTIC OPPONENTS. END SUMMARY.

¶3. FOLLOWING NUMEROUS CONVERSATIONS BY CONSUL GENERAL WITH PA OFFICIALS JANUARY 24 URGING A FIRM PA RESPONSE TO THE BEIT LID BOMBING, NABIL SHA'ATH CALLED CONSUL GENERAL TUESDAY EVENING TO INFORM HIM THAT AT ARAFAT'S ORDERS, FOUR PRINCIPAL ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADERS IN GAZA HAD BEEN ARRESTED. THE FOUR ARE ABDALLAH AL SHAMI, ABDALLAH SULIEMAN AL ZUQ, MOHAMMAD ABDALLAH SHALLAH AND OMAR MOHAMMAD FURAH. SHA'ATH SAID THAT SEVERAL GUARDS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS HAD ALSO BEEN ARRESTED. CONSUL GENERAL SAID THAT THIS WAS A GOOD MOVE BUT FOLLOW THROUGH WAS VERY IMPORTANT. IF THESE INDIVIDUALS WERE HELD FOR A FEW DAYS AND RELEASED, THE ACTION WOULD BE MEANINGLESS. SHA'ATH SAID HE UNDERSTOOD. HE SAID THAT ARAFAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IS DETERMINED TO TAKE CONCRETE MEASURES.

¶4. REFERRING TO RABIN'S ADDRESS TO THE ISRAELI NATION JANUARY 23, SHA'ATH SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT RABIN HAD BEEN VERY STATESMANLIKE IN HIS DETERMINATION TO PROCEED WITH THE PEACE PROCESS. HE SAID THAT HE, ARAFAT AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS UNDERSTOOD THE TREMENDOUS PRESSURE THAT RABIN WAS UNDER BECAUSE OF THE BEIT LID BOMBING. AS FOR A STRONG STATEMENT BY ARAFAT CONDEMNING THE BOMBING, SHA'ATH SAID THAT ARAFAT HAD MADE TWO SPEECHES IN GAZA JANUARY 24 ATTACKING THE ISLAMISTS FOR ACTIONS TAKEN WHICH DAMAGED PALESTINIAN INTERESTS. SHA'ATH SAID THAT THIS WAS THE STRONGEST ATTACK EVER AGAINST THE ISLAMIC MILITANTS. HE REPEATED THAT THERE WAS MUCH MORE RESOLVE ON ARAFAT'S PART TO CONFRONT THE MILITANTS.

¶5. SHA'ATH EXPRESSED ANXIETY ABOUT RABIN'S DOMESTIC POSITION AND SAID THAT RABIN NEEDS USG SUPPORT VIS-A-VIS HIS DOMESTIC OPPONENTS. HE ALSO RAISED THE CLOSURE OF GAZA AND JERICHO, ASKING FOR U.S. INTERCESSION WITH RABIN TO ADVISE HIM AGAINST AN EXTENDED CLOSURE AS OCCURRED AFTER THE TEL AVIV BOMBING. SHA'ATH SAID THAT THE MOOD IN GAZA IS CURRENTLY VERY MUCH AGAINST ISLAMIC JIHAD. HE SAID THAT EVEN HAMAS IS TRYING TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE IJ. HOWEVER, THE LONGER THE CLOSURES LAST THE MORE THE AVERAGE PALESTINIAN WILL BLAME THE PA FOR THEIR ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES.

¶6. SHA'ATH SAID THAT WHEN THE CLOSURE HAD BEEN INITIALLY IMPOSED, LOCAL IDF UNITS WERE PREVENTING ALL TRAFFIC TO AND FROM GAZA INCLUDING BANNING OF FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES FROM REACHING GAZA AND CUTTING OFF THE

EXPORT OF FLOWERS AND STRAWBERRIES FROM GAZA. SHA'ATH SAID HE COMPLAINED ABOUT THIS TO DANNY ROTHSCHILD IN A MEETING AT EREZ JANUARY 24 AND ROTHSCHILD HAD STRAIGHTENED OUT THE PROBLEM OF THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS TO AND FROM GAZA. ROTHSCHILD ALSO TOLD SHA'ATH THAT THE CLOSURE WOULD LAST NO LONGER THAN THE END OF THE WEEK. SHA'ATH SAID HE HOPES THAT THIS WILL BE THE CASE.

¶7. NABIL ABU RUDEINA ALSO CONFIRMED TO CONSUL GENERAL THAT ARAFAT ORDERED THE ARREST OF THE FOUR ISLAMIC JIHAD LEADERS. ABU RUDEINA SAID THAT ARAFAT PLANS TO LEAVE LATER TODAY FOR HIS MEETING IN AMMAN WITH KING HUSSEIN.

ABINGTON